

INCOMING TELEGRAM

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FROM: Paris

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TO: Secretary of State

NO: 2727, January 26, 6 p.m.

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Foreign Office agrees with British suggestions reported reference telegram re timing of working group meetings, content of note to Soviets, and believes general agenda heading of "Germany" for conference would be acceptable. However, as Couve informed Ambassador January 24 (EMBTEL 2714), French oppose offering date in April for convocation of conference. This was confirmed to us today by Laloy and Jurgensen, who say Foreign Office definitely prefers proposing conference without specified date.

Jurgensen says French will have their draft reply to Soviet January 10 note ready for consideration prior to February 5. Re re-thinking of western position on Germany, Jurgensen advises US Foreign Office to date has come up with only very minor suggestions pertaining largely to presentation of west's Geneva 1955 position in more appealing form. Thus, French may suggest for consideration by four-power group that possibility be studied of direct contacts between East and West Germany in order to prepare for free elections. Also, French believe might be merit in pressing East Germans to accept West German publications and broadcasts more freely. French may also propose four-power conciliation committee for Berlin (see letter Sts Essel to Hillenbrand January 14).

Jurgensen noted Italians are already pressing French for more substantive contact with work of four-power group on German problem. Although Italians have told French they realize they can not expect to participate directly in preparations for conference.

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Italians

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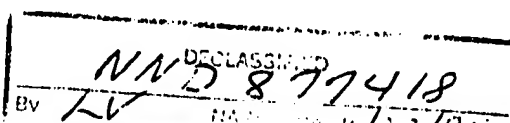
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-2- 2727, January 26, 6 p.m., from Paris.

Italians stress that their internal political situation makes it more than ever advisable they be able to say that their views have been taken into account by responsible powers.

French are sympathetic to Italian concern, although they feel it will be difficult to satisfy Italians. As strictly unofficial working-level suggestion, Jurgensen wondered if it might be of assistance in this respect to reactivate NATO committee on European security. French believe this committee played helpful role in discussions last spring of possible summit conference and found it was especially useful as means of appeasing Italians. Even if reactivation of committee before meeting of four-power group in Washington is not feasible, Jurgensen thought it might be worth considering whether committee might be useful at later stage, after four governments have reviewed substantive positions.

We would appreciate Department's views on this suggestion.

USRO feels idea may have merit but that it appears premature at this juncture.

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